

Hist. of Swed. Denmark vol 2.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS
REGARDING
THE PRESENT STATE
OF
THE KINGDOM OF DENMARK. *k*

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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

RECORDING

OFFICIAL RECORDS

THE KINGDOM OF DENMARK



PRINTED BY THE COURT OF A FOUR MADE

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS, &c.

SECTION I.

Of the Soil and Climate of Denmark.

THE soil of Zealand, and of the rest of the Danish dominions, Norway alone excepted, is in general excellent, and well intitled to better cultivation than it in general meets with. The climate, however, is not very favourable. It is violently hot in summer, and consequently very relaxing; and the winters are wet and damp, with less snow than could be supposed, considering its northern situation. The air being, therefore, either hot or moist, it seldom agrees with strangers; and the water is so unwholesome, that it is very apt to occasion complaints in the stomach, if it is drunk in any quantity.

S E C T.

S E C T. II.

Of the Character and Manners of the People.

THE ancient Danes are represented to have been a strong, hardy, and martial race of men. But ever since the establishment of a despotic government, *anno* 1660, they have been gradually degenerating; and for above a century past have done nothing worthy of their former reputation and glory. The Nobles are in general overbearing to all below them; expensive and luxurious; and the Commons idle and dispirited. The diet of the peasants is very poor; and they are much addicted to spirituous liquors. They wear nothing but wooden shoes; which cramping the circulation, and giving the muscles of their feet no play, occasions sometimes lameness, and makes the generality of them walk very indifferently.

They seem to have no turn for manufactures. They are awkward about the most common articles; and a smith, even at Copenhagen, was two days in furnishing me with a small key; and after all made it very indifferently. Their leather is particularly bad and slight, and their wooden work very clumsy. They have got a tolerable hat-manufacture, and a china one, which they have brought to great perfection, both in regard to strength and beauty; but at an immense expence.

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They are very busy imitating English agriculture, gardening *, and improvements. But a few examples will not be sufficient; for industry can never flourish in a country where so many festivals are observed †, and where the enjoyment of property is so precarious, from the demands of the government, and the oppression of the nobles. They had an example of industry before their eyes, above a century ago, from a Dutch colony settled on the isle of Amack, in the neighbourhood of Copenhagen. But the Amakers remain the same people, equally active and laborious as ever; and so do the Danes, working no more than is absolutely necessary. The attempt, however, is laudable; though it will not probably be attended with any very important consequences.

The manners of the Danes are modelled more after the English than the French fashion. They have *clubs*, in imitation of those in London, where nothing but the English language is spoken. That has given rise to some odd mistakes. One gentleman, in particular, thought that *ch* was always pronounced *k*, and ordered *a good kicking*, instead of *chicken*, for his dinner.

* The Danish gardeners have a curious practice of covering the blossoms of their fruit-trees in the day-time, and leaving them exposed to the open air at night. This keeps them back until the season is favourable; and hence they hardly ever lose their wall-fruit. They also raise, in the winter-time, colliflowers in their cellars, so as to be ready early in the spring.

† About St John's day, (the 24th of June), in particular, they are idle for about three weeks.

S E C T. III.

Of the Royal Family.

THE young Prince of Denmark promises well. In his appearance he resembles the Royal Family of England. He studies much, and, what is always a good sign in a person of his rank, rises early in the morning. He has not as yet indulged himself to any excess in women, wine, or at the table. He has already improved the Danish troops, which were in very bad order; and takes such pleasure in sailing about in the splendid yacht given him by the King of Great Britain, and is so attentive to every thing connected with the fleet, that I am persuaded the Danish navy, during his administration, will never be neglected.

The great object of intrigue at Court is the Prince's marriage. When he was very young, he was prevailed upon by the Queen-Dowager to write a letter, engaging himself to marry one of the Prussian Princesses. Some are for a Hessian connection; and I was told of a Danish gentleman who married a great favourite of the present Princess of Hesse, whom otherwise he would not have thought of, upon that speculation. But the majority seem anxious for an alliance with a daughter of the Royal House of England; and where could he do so well?

The Queen-Dowager affects to live quite retired at Fredings-
bourg;

bourg; and her son, Prince Frederick, though of the privy council, takes no concern in public affairs. But they have still a considerable party, who would willingly again assume the reins of government, if they had an opportunity; and as they were very lavish of the public money when in power, their friends would gladly see those golden days again.

Failing the young Prince, his uncle, Prince Frederick, succeeds to the Crown, and as he is not likely to leave any family behind him, (all his children dying young), the Princess Louisa is the next in succession. It is unfortunate that so amiable a young Princess, with a chance of succeeding to the Crown of Denmark, had not been secured for some of our Royal Family. The Prince d'Augustenbourg, to whom she is married, was no great match. His father, who has only from L. 10,000 to L. 12,000 a-year, allows him nothing, all that he can spare going to his younger children; and they have little to live on but the Princess's allowance of 20,000 dollars *per annum*, and 3500 dollars which he receives as a cabinet minister. As he is likely to have much to say at the Court of Denmark, and is so nearly connected with the Royal Family of England, and at present so much stinted in his income, it might neither be an improper, nor an impolitic measure, to allow him a pension of L. 500 or L. 1000 *per annum*, on the Irish establishment, to continue during his father's life.

S E C T.

S E C T. IV.

Of the Danish Ministers.

THE Court is divided into two parties, the Queen-Dowager's, or that of Goulberg's, who was Prince Frederick's preceptor, and that of the Crown Prince, as they call him in Denmark. The latter is also subdivided into two parties: Count Bernstoff is at the head of the one, and has the majority of the council with him; M. de Shack-Rathlow, supported by Rosencrantz, the minister of the marine, compose the other. The Prince is much puzzled between them, but it is supposed is best inclined to support the Bernstoff interest.

Shack-Rathlow is not inferior to his rival in point of ability; but is not so assiduous or well informed; nor does he bear so high a character for integrity, being accounted a thorough-paced politician. His family is of the ancient Danish nobility: He is about fifty-five years of age, with a considerable fortune, but not very popular.

Count Bernstoff is a very respectable and able man. His family came originally from Holstein, but they have been for some time settled in Zealand. He succeeded an uncle who enfranchised all his peasants; and to whose memory a marble monument was
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erected at their sole expence, as a token of their gratitude. He is a tall good looking man, about fifty, with two sons and a daughter grown up, and several other children. His family were all by a former Lady, who was full sister to his present wife, which seems an improper connection to an Englishman. His house, (the Castle of Bernstoff), where he lives in a very splendid style, is charmingly situated, within a short distance of Copenhagen. The family seems to be well arranged, and very happy in each other. He is much troubled with the gout, a distemper very unusual in the northern parts of Europe. He is by far an abler man, and better politician, than I expected to have met with in Denmark. He holds the foreign department. Is very anxious to procure information from every quarter; and I am persuaded keeps the envoys from Denmark very alert at their business. He seems well disposed towards England, but I suspect is still better inclined to support the political objects of the two Imperial Courts of Petersburg and Vienna. No circumstance can prove more strongly the vanity of human wisdom, or the short-sightedness of human policy. If the party of the Queen-Dowager had at this time the government of Denmark, it would have followed the system of Prussia, our intimate ally. But at present a jealousy of, and opposition to the views of the Court of Berlin may be expected, and, from our connection with Prussia, even a coldness towards us. Yet at the time, the revolution which took place in the Danish administration, and the appointment of Bernstoff to be minister, was reckoned a fortunate circumstance for this country.

S E C T. V.

Of the Foreign Ministers at Copenhagen.

THE *French* minister does not seem to be a very dangerous man, being weak and talkative, a sign that the Court of France have it not in view, or do not much expect, to carry any point in Denmark. The *Spanish* (Le Marquis de Musquis) bears an excellent character, and is much liked by every body. He lives in a good style, keeps one of the best houses in Copenhagen, understands the English language, and seems much attached to this country. The *Russian* (Count Rasamoufky) is an able man, but very proud. He quarrelled with the Grand Marshal about a trifling piece of etiquette, and carried the dispute so far, that it was thought advisable to change the place of his embassy from Denmark to Sweden, after he had laid out L. 1000 in repairing and fitting up a house at Copenhagen. The *Swedish* is a tough, obstinate, but shrewd old gentleman. The *Austrian* has quite the appearance of a spirited, honest, English country gentleman. He has been in England, and speaks the language well. *Elliot*, the English minister, is much talked of. He has disoblged some people by smart speeches, and many are jealous of his abilities, but on the whole he is well calculated for the sphere in which he is placed.

S E C T.

S E C T. VI.

Of the Political System of the Danish Court.

A Short statement of the situation of Denmark will clearly explain what its politics *must* be. It can do nothing in favour of England in time of war, (except permitting its subjects to enter into our service), unless Russia heartily joins us. Its dominions are very scattered, and very liable to be attacked. Sweden looks with a wishful eye at Norway; and it is a rooted principal among the Swedes, that Denmark should possess nothing to the north of the Baltic. The Norwegians dislike the Danes; but fortunately for Denmark, they detest the Swedes most cordially, and from the strength of their country, will always be able to defend themselves with their militia of 25,000 men, against any attack that is likely to be made upon them. But on the other hand, the Danish islands of Zealand, Fionee, &c. in severe winters, are very accessible to the Swedes, over the ice; the very idea of which keeps them in perpetual awe of such warlike neighbours, who have often been at the very gates of Copenhagen. The fleet of Denmark is indeed superior to that of Sweden, but in the winter-season, when the Baltic is frozen over, that is of no importance.

Besides, war is always dangerous to a despotic government. The Court knows well that the people are far from relishing their present situation; that they could not bear any additional taxes;
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and that possibly advantage might be taken of public distresses, to procure a restoration of some of their former privileges.

They recollect farther with much satisfaction the sweets of the armed neutrality during the late war. It was amusing to them to be spectators of a bloody contest, without danger or expence. The addition to their commerce also, particularly in the article of freight, was very great. In short, it would be very difficult to prevail upon the Danes to support us in any war we may happen to be engaged in, especially in opposition to the wishes of Russia, whose claims upon Holstein are well known, and who have guaranteed to them the payment of the duties at the Sound, which forms so important a branch of their finances. Indeed the whole revenue of the kingdom being swallowed up by the peace-establishment, and its credit being at the lowest ebb, no material assistance could be expected from it, except at an enormous expence.

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C O N C L U S I O N.

IT is proposed to conclude with some miscellaneous Observations, which could not well be comprehended under any of the preceding general heads.

It is unfortunate for Denmark and Sweden that they are mutually so jealous of each other. Russia takes advantage of that circumstance to keep them both under, and to tyrannize over the North. Of the two, the Danes are the most inveterate. They are anxious to be considered a braver, a richer, a more polite, and a more learned nation than their neighbours; and the most agreeable of all topics, is to compare them with the Swedes, and to cast the balance in their favour. In regard to learning, they have the advantage in one point, namely, in the number of volumes they have published. 25,000 different works have been printed in Denmark, and it is said not above 18,000 in Sweden.

The capital (Copenhagen) is admirably situated, were it not so much exposed to the attacks of the Swedes during the winter season. It is well fortified, and could stand a siege for some time, were it ably defended. The inhabitants have been lately numbered, and amount to about 94,000 souls. Its most remarkable buildings are, the Royal Palace, a great but heavy edifice, principally built from the profit of English subsidies; and

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the Tower of the famous Tycho Brahe, of a very peculiar construction, being perfectly round, and formed so that a coach and six may drive to the top of it.

The Danish fleet is entirely kept in the harbour of Copenhagen, but in so very dangerous a situation, that it might be easily destroyed by any desperate incendiary. The ships are by far too contiguous to the harbour, into which merchantmen are admitted, and are moored by much too close to each other. An artificial harbour could easily be made, that might hold the fleet in perfect safety, could the expence of it be afforded.

The Danish regulations for manning the fleet, and for the discipline of the navy, are reckoned the best in Europe. The number of registered seamen in Denmark and Norway are about 50,000, and it is said that 16,000 were in our service during the last war. The sum appropriated for the marine does not exceed L. 200,000 *per annum*. But they propose having in all 50 sail of the line, and to build three sail every two years.

The army and militia, until lately improved by the attention of the Prince, were in very bad order. The common soldiers are mostly recruited in Germany, at the expence of L. 20 per head; but having no national attachment, take every opportunity of deserting to Sweden, where they find shelter and protection. The militia of Norway are reckoned the flower of the Danish forces; and the Norwegian guards in particular are supposed to be as fine a body of men as any in Europe.

The public revenue does not exceed a million *per annum*, of which L. 100,000 arises from the duties of the Sound, a resource which cannot always be depended on, as nothing but the joint guarantee

guarantee of Great Britain and Russia preserves it in existence. It is certainly a remnant of barbarism, to demand a toll for the liberty of passing an old Castle, and to threaten a piratical attack upon those who endeavour to evade it. Besides, Sweden possesses one side of the strait, and consequently seems to have an equal claim to a similar exaction.

The Danes have an idea that their power and command over the entrance into the Baltick may yet be increased. The deepest part of the Sound is contiguous to them, and they assert that by filling up two or three channels, no vessel of any burden could pass, but through the harbour of Copenhagen. As it is, a ship of 90 or 100 guns must lighten itself considerably, before it can sail from the Baltick into the German ocean. This is a circumstance intitled to particular inquiry, since, were it practicable, it would be the easiest mode of keeping the naval ambition of Russia within moderate bounds.

The commerce of Denmark would be considerable, were it not so cramped by monopolies, prohibitions, and exorbitant duties. The principal article it imports from Great Britain is coal, which would be consumed in larger quantities, were it not for a very particular circumstance. Ashes, by the custom of Denmark, is the perquisite of the house-maid. Wood yields great quantities, which sell well; and as hardly any are produced by coal, the house-maids of Copenhagen therefore remonstrate against the use of that species of fuel, and will hardly serve in a family where it is burnt. It is said that freestone might answer well in the Danish market, and many other British commodities, were the importation of them permitted.

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The Danish East India Company is supposed to be flourishing, and indeed the shipping of the Company has increased from three to fourteen sail. But its prosperity is very fallacious. It principally arises from the permission which they give to British merchants to fit out ships under Danish colours, upon paying 8 per cent for the value of the ship and cargo, going out and coming home. The goods brought from India are almost entirely the property of English Nabobs, who remit their fortunes through the medium of the Danish Company, but who leave none of their wealth in Denmark. The enormous sums they draw from it, have almost drained the country of specie, and made the exchange so unfavourable, that it is with the utmost difficulty the Danes can keep it within any reasonable bounds.

To conclude, so far as I could judge from a short residence in those countries, both Denmark and Sweden are kingdoms on too small a scale for the present state of European society, and will never enjoy much political happiness, until, either by conquest or marriage, they are united. Both the Danes and Swedes endeavour to follow the example of their wealthier neighbours, in keeping up a splendid court, in maintaining considerable armies, and in fitting out formidable fleets. But a system of so expensive a nature cannot long be pursued without the most grievous oppression, and indeed has already reduced both countries to a state of misery and dependence. Were they united, instead of being in a manner the vassals of Russia, they might keep that empire in awe, and might soon become one of the most powerful and respectable monarchies that Europe has to boast of.



